

you'll come back  
to yourself



*michaela angemeeer*

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*for oma*

i feel like i need to practice  
*not falling in love*

table of contents

[holding on](#)

[ouroboros](#)

[letting go](#)

# holding on

[hohl-ding on]

*verb*

1. to maintain a grasp on something: hang on
2. to await something (such as a telephone connection) desired or requested broadly
3. to maintain possession of or adherence to





when your breath is hot  
it feels more weighted than you know  
i am soft  
but you have always been  
hard and heavy  
i've never been one to show  
the insides of my soul first  
but resistance to closeness  
pulls me in for reasons  
i do know  
but do not like to talk about  
i guess there are some things  
i need to relearn  
if my life is a pendulum  
or we are just on swings  
when you push me away  
i need to learn to push back

i always cave first  
it's like the hollows  
inside of me  
are asking you to stay

nothing is more dangerous  
than a lie said with a smile

i will put you in a support group  
with all the men that came before you  
just know that when your throat is dry  
they are not the kind to bring you water  
don't count on hands holding you up  
these palms are distracted and looking  
for someone else to hold  
i will put you in a support group  
you could  
make an acronym with your names  
design t-shirts  
laugh at the words i wrote about you  
put the puzzle pieces together if  
you can't figure out who i belonged to  
at which point in time  
i will put you in a support group  
you could  
meet every thursday  
eat stale doughnuts  
try to forget about me  
but none of these men ever show up on time  
and you always left early

when you  
were standing right  
beside me could you feel  
the galaxy i put between us

i have been let down  
by men  
so many times

*there is no disappointment left for you*

i just want a brick by brick love story  
please, men:  
where's the concrete  
foundation where you know  
what you're looking for  
and i know i'm it  
all we've got are  
leaky water beds  
my knees are soaked from trying  
to balance your instability  
the sopping wet floor where  
you left your promises to drown  
is bound to cave in  
give me cement  
i'm tired of picking feathers out  
from between my teeth  
so here i sit  
in barren land with dirt-stained knees  
don't plant seeds of commitment  
in my mind  
if you never intend to water them



i tried so hard  
to be whole for you  
but it turns out

*you like me better when i'm in pieces*

i knew everything about who

i wanted you to be

*and nothing about who you really were*

i am having a funeral for  
all the texts you typed  
then deleted before  
sending me

here lies  
*i know*  
poignant but too dramatic  
it will be missed regardless

here lies  
a rambling message  
that goes on longer than  
*you have reached the maximum number of characters*

here lies  
*i wish you said something*  
that one i'll kiss before covering it with dirt  
cause it's what i wanted to read  
but never will

here lies  
*you're crazy and i'm a narcissist*  
and honestly i can't close the casket on that one  
because although i prefer *dramatic*  
i know that it's true

i swear i would  
stop thinking about you  
but i know  
*you'll just come back when i do*

since you left  
i got worse at parallel parking  
but i can drink coffee black  
without making a face  
i learned that it's possible  
to not kill plants  
and that i look best in  
the mornings wearing  
olive green  
i've figured out how to ask  
for what i want  
to yell when i'm being talked over  
that i can make people feel  
things they've been ignoring  
just by being honest  
if i'm being honest  
i still let myself think of you  
once a day  
and i will keep asking  
even if you never hear me  
can you let go of someone  
without forgetting how they made you feel?

*can you let go of someone*  
**WITHOUT**  
**FORGETTING**  
**HOW THEY**  
**MADE YOU**  
**FEEL?**

loving you was like  
choosing to cross the tracks  
*even though i knew a train was coming*

my love for you  
won't leave  
this city



the worst thing about loving you  
wasn't you leaving

*it was hoping you'd come back*

the leftover

bits of my heart are crying out

*no service*

i am so sorry to disappoint but

you will not find

what you're looking for here

when he says that he's  
scared of hurting you

*it's not empathy, it's a warning*

i am no longer soft  
i built this city on  
broken spines  
and cracked open rib cages  
my collar bones  
prop up street lamps  
femurs line railroads  
tibias stacked to build straw homes  
my smashed skull is why  
no one lives here anymore  
i am sorry you expected  
petals when  
all i'll ever have  
are bones

i hope you don't mind  
but i changed the lock on the door to my dreams  
from now on no longer will you be able  
to stare longingly at me from across tables  
not saying a word  
while my eyes are closed  
even worse sometimes the pictures in my mind  
play scenes of you pretending i no longer exist  
though i am not awake  
when you ignore me  
it still brings tears to eyes shut  
sometimes the story is wrapped around  
you coming back  
but even while asleep you manage  
to make me so furious  
with your purposefully  
opposing opinions and  
manipulative world views  
as i lay here with this new dream lock i wonder  
how does my unconscious know all the songs  
you would have sang if you had never left  
though this time there is a deadbolt  
and i will not be making copies of the key

i thought  
i would have a lifetime  
to be in love with you  
*it ended in a second*

if you fall in love  
with someone's potential  
you will break your own heart

this is me,  
palms open, face up  
asking for saving  
this is me,  
blue lips, bare skin  
screaming in silence  
this is me,  
no brick in hand  
no more wars left to fight  
this is me,  
hand on heart  
this is me,  
i am here  
i am all that's left  
this is me,  
missing you



i held my breath  
waiting for you  
turns out i don't need you  
*i just need room to breathe*

i am bursting at  
my seams with joy  
do you hear that?  
it is the sound of happiness  
seeping out of me  
but the ghosts around here  
cast shadows of sadness  
loneliness  
i just want someone  
to be happy with

i'm sorry  
you were afraid  
of my kind of love

things i can't let go of:

1. bad blood
2. missed birthdays
3. messages left on read
4. hangnails
5. makeup that's passed its prime
6. carbs
7. my first stuffed toy
8. the fear of falling
9. the fear of failing
10. split ends
11. empty wine bottles with nice labels
12. my mother's sweatshirt
13. pajamas with holes in them
14. checking a bag at the airport
15. writing everything in lowercase
16. black winged eyeliner
17. the number eighteen
18. you

your roots will always show you  
the importance of holding on  
to what grounds you  
but don't ignore the lessons  
the leaves are trying to teach you

i have let go of you  
more than one thousand times  
still you are a wave  
always crashing back into me  
i will keep floating  
i will keep letting go  
i will keep hoping  
that this time is the last

# ouroboros

[oor-uh-bohr-uhs]

*noun*

1. a circular symbol depicting a snake biting, swallowing, or eating its own tail, as an emblem of the cyclic nature of the universe: creation out of destruction.





don't cry at mavis and britannia  
it took more than an intersection  
for you to learn that red means it's over  
and more than a white lie phone call  
of i'll be there in fifteen  
which still means thirty or an hour

when you are fed infidelity  
you learn to be a prong  
on the wheel of misfortune  
you never learn how to build  
a foundation  
or a lasting bond between two

but you sure know  
the step-by-step instructions  
of breaking one down  
i am dynamite  
i am red means go  
i am the collision

if i stay in the same place  
how will i know  
if you're leaving me  
or just leaving

*shh*

don't say a word

i'm here to project all

my expectations onto you

google search, 'why am i only attracted to'

why am i only attracted to older guys

why am i only attracted to emotionally unavailable guys

why am i only attracted to my ex

why am i only attracted to guys in relationships

why am i only attracted to sociopaths

how is your timing  
so bad

*you'd think you'd never seen a clock*

why is emotionally unavailable  
typed under boyfriend material  
in the dictionary i store the  
broken pieces of my heart in  
when did my brain learn that  
crossed arms mean welcome home  
if he tells you he doesn't text girls back  
(it's not a joke)  
he means it

how do commitment issues still send  
a tingle down my spine  
never been in a long-term relationship  
translates into a challenge i can handle  
him leaving at the crack of dawn feels  
like a responsible decision  
when it's all you've known  
changing the subject when i ask about his mother  
is just an inside joke between the two of us

i've learned to love the empty space  
beside me in bed  
but when i look at it long enough  
i swear i can hear the outline  
of where he used to lay ask me,  
why do we keep loving people  
who can't love us back?

Why do we keep LOVING people  
who can't LOVE us back?

some loves are not rational. they are simply impractical. they are not forever loves. they are fleeting moments. outstretched hands. a kiss on the cheek on tippy toes. they are falling asleep with the tv on, shoulders touching. they are voicemails that will never be listened to. a message that will never be read. but the great loves are not the only ones that help you grow. the little loves teach us how to love without expectation. the little loves teach us how to live a life filled with the love we deserve.



please don't look at me  
this is not love  
this is every breath i've ever taken  
this is the north star  
the sun rising until it bursts  
this is more than my heart  
this is i am in love with you  
and i can't do anything about it

you make me feel  
like myself  
times infinity

build me a house  
of LEGO  
i need walls  
that are easier to take down

i have been saving  
this empty space for you

*everyone else falls right through it*

darkness falls so quickly  
i can count down the seconds  
until the sun sets  
you, my dear,  
are not so predictable  
at eleven pm i listen to the wind  
to see if i can hear you  
all i'm greeted with  
is silence and  
my own heart beat but  
i will keep saving the moon for you even  
if there's no room for me before midnight

i don't want to get  
out of the water  
i have grown accustomed  
to being consumed by you  
and even though  
the moon tells me  
*it's time*  
i don't think i'll ever  
be able to walk  
on land again

it's just you,  
me, and  
blue morning light

i don't care  
how we got here  
i just want to scream  
from rooftops with you



i can't explain where  
all my love for you  
came from  
it's as if we once  
raised a child  
baby fingers gripping pinkies  
or died together on  
a bed of dandelions  
it's as if i were the moon  
and you were the sun  
always convincing each other  
the next day was worth rising for  
and when i was too caught  
up in being the ocean you  
never forgot to remind me  
what your earth felt like  
i don't know if we'll finally  
collide in this century  
but i am certain i have  
loved you in more than  
*a thousand different lifetimes*

it's ok  
to choose  
to need someone

i cannot promise  
how i will feel  
tomorrow but  
tonight i am  
in love with you

*fickle*

i just want to  
watch space jam  
with you  
talk about how  
young michael jordan is  
*what is he even doing now*  
and how do the aliens  
get so big i barely  
remember the plot  
of this but  
something about  
90s movies makes  
me want to be with you

i wrote this on a sticky note  
hoping it would turn into a permanent promise  
we can just be bedhead and tea in the morning  
if you wake up on the wrong side  
i can be a smile that tries anyway  
we can just be you and me hand in hand walking nowhere  
laughing hard at nothing with no plans of stopping  
we can just be car rides where i ask you to drive  
if you let me change the station  
i'll let you keep the windows open  
we can just be the best and worst things  
that have happened to each other  
we can just be broken pieces glued together  
we can just be north star and full moon  
we can just be your trust and my fear of letting go  
you can just be you  
and i can just be me  
and we can just be us

i keep seeing rainbows  
that aren't there  
baby, it's just droplets  
reflecting in your eyes  
cause these clouds are grey  
and there's a sixty percent chance  
it will still be raining  
at midnight

there's something about  
banter the quick back and  
forth of a witty exchange  
synchronicity at it's best  
you can feel the tension  
building up inside you  
because girl, words  
have always affected  
you in ways hands can't  
but the problem with  
banter when it's typed is it's  
said with no inflection left  
to interpretation by  
two people who have a  
map but don't know where  
they're going when you  
decide to place your  
black mirrors face down  
and face each other  
it can be hard for  
your tongues to  
speak the same language  
of quick wit which your  
ingers have memorized

you can have all  
of me or  
nothing at all  
*choose*



how many times in the average day  
do you think of me  
while you're with her  
and brush the thought away

where is she  
while you're with me

where is she  
while you're with me

where is she  
while you're with me

*is this what you wanted?*

is This  
what i  
WANTED?

how many times will i let myself be  
a second choice  
before i learn that

*there are no runner-ups in love*

i feel prettier in the sun  
warm me up  
i need nose freckles  
to feel like myself  
hold my hand  
before it melts  
tell me i'm prettier  
when it's warmer  
tell me i'm prettier  
than her

instead of treating people like possessions  
i'm trying to treat them like  
just-mine-for-a-while  
a borrowed suitcase  
or a hand-me-down sweater  
i never know when i'll have to give you back  
and you cannot be mine  
if you belong to someone else

feelings

are

not

facts

*therapy lessons part 2*

three times  
three times  
three times  
i've written this three times

a joint bank account  
an engagement ring  
a wedding  
none of which  
are signals

that it's my turn  
it's not my turn  
it's not my turn  
it's not my turn

but still i crawl on the line  
between friends and more than  
all i've learned is how to love  
in spaces that aren't mine  
i'm holding on to smashed bricks  
trying to build a foundation  
from someone else's home

why did he look at me like that  
why did he look at me like that  
why did he look at me like that  
why do you look at me like that

why do i keep falling in love  
with people who are meant  
for someone else



where do i find a man  
who does not  
want me to wait for him

if he's afraid to fully  
fall in love with you

*save your time and love yourself instead*

you will always  
be happy to see me  
but never enough to stay

i don't know how to colour inside the lines  
and it might be too late for me to learn  
so i'm drawing maps  
with convoluted directions  
and i'm lost  
and i'm ripping out the pages  
and making them into paper airplanes  
and i'm throwing them at your head  
and i'm missing  
and you don't see them  
and i miss you  
and you don't see me  
and you're not leaving her  
and you're not leaving her  
and you're not leaving her

i have dedicated each of my bones  
to an unworthy man  
(crack, break)  
here i am  
once again in pieces  
when will i learn that no man  
needs to consume a part of me  
and i have more to offer than just flesh

not everyone deserves  
to hold your heart  
in their hands

if he was worth waiting for  
he would be with you now

you  
can make  
someone love  
you but you can't  
make them choose you



when we first met light reflected  
between the two of us  
laughter bonded our souls  
oh, what a warm, easy love  
things were so simple when  
we didn't know what was  
in store for us if only  
i could have lived  
in the clouds forever  
with your lightning eyes  
and raindrop lips  
it's too bad gravity  
took hold of us because  
your heart is the only place  
that has ever felt like home

you deserve a call me anytime love. a pick you up from the airport love. a love note on napkins kind of love. a chicken noodle soup for sore throats kind of love. a back rub before bed kind of love. a laughs at your bad jokes kind of love. a reminder to get up ten minutes earlier because it snowed and you're going to have to clean off your car kind of love. a clean off your car for you kind of love. a bring you cheesecake when you have cramps kind of love. a listening love. a love that takes care of you. a love that sees your messy hair, your morning breath, your spiralling mind, your no sleep crankiness, a love that loves you more because of it. you deserve a requited love. a love that lasts.

i've always been cyclical  
good at returning to the start  
bad at forgetting  
these spirals won't spin themselves  
i am so used to the  
coming and going  
the leaving  
goodbye feels like the only thing i can rely on  
but you  
you have refused to be part of my cycles  
there you are standing still  
reliability looks so good on you  
but you  
you are a pillar meant to hold up someone else  
and i can barely stand it  
maybe it is time to get up  
maybe it is time to move on  
maybe this time  
goodbye is meant for me

# letting go

[let-ting goh]

*verb*

1. to stop holding something
2. to relax one's hold: release
3. to discuss or consider no further
4. often used figuratively: you need to let go of the past



when what you love loses meaning  
life feels like swallowing lava  
am i still breathing?  
reading a book like  
pouring acid into my eyes  
how can i find kinship with printed words  
when my sockets are sizzling flesh  
when i dance my feet turn into  
one hundred pound bags of sand  
anchored with bones  
what happened to cloud nine?  
laughter like  
shovelling coal into once red lungs  
can you see the soot between my teeth?  
i am coughing on black powder  
but when i write  
the ocean fills up my eyes  
i am reminded that salt is healing  
and words hurt less with eyes closed  
one, two,  
just breathe  
three, four,  
inhale, exhale  
five, six

*your life is worth so much more than this*

you don't have to ignore  
all the things  
that you're sad about

am i depressed  
am i depressed  
am i depressed

t think i'm depressed  
i think i'm depressed  
i think i'm depressed

i'm depressed  
i'm depressed  
i'm depressed

*nothing can change until you say it*



what does it mean to feel like yourself

some days  
self love is fragile  
especially in  
the bathroom mirror  
if you pat yourself on the back  
it doesn't count  
if it's a fat hand  
okay okay,  
you got this  
look at your reflection  
*i am worth it*  
look at your stomach  
*i am not*  
turn off the lights  
*skinny mary*  
*skinny mary*  
*skinny mary*  
all that appears  
are the dimples on your arms  
i just want to see  
the hollows of my cheeks  
some days are  
tougher than others  
when self love can't be  
summoned from the outside in

i like to use the version of men  
that only exists in my head  
to fill the holes where otherwise

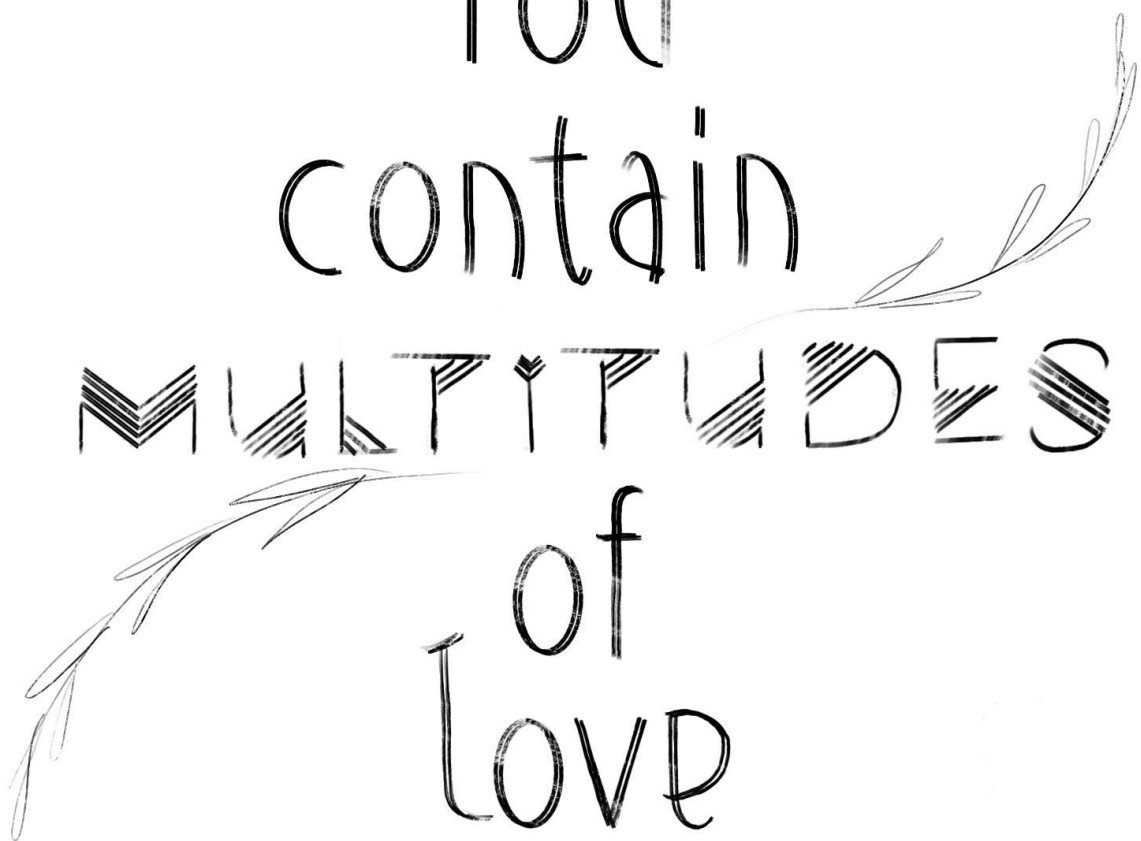
*i feel nothing*

spring smells like spruce  
trees chopped down  
outside my  
three-story apartment  
but i have more than three stories  
to tell and  
i am tired of being  
the tree that everyone hangs from  
(chop me down)  
my limbs are getting sore  
(chop me down)  
my limbs are breaking off  
(chop me down)  
get it over with  
i can't learn to stand on my own  
without starting from nothing  
*i am just beginning*

this year was the unpacking of all my baggage  
no pocket left unturned  
these zippers won't close anymore  
i ripped them open  
who knew you could fit all of this luggage  
inside a cracked heart  
this year i let go of  
twenty-five years of worn-in leather  
and scuffed nylon  
did you see me explode?  
i thought a backpack could hold  
the doubts i had about my self-worth  
turns out a duffel bag couldn't hide  
my confused body image  
my purse can hold three lipsticks  
hand lotion  
and a hair brush  
but it's a little too small for all the horrible  
things i've said about myself  
and i never found  
a suitcase big enough  
to carry all the things i'm still afraid of  
but i've realized that an open heart  
can carry more than a cargo hold  
and the palms of my hands are  
so much warmer when held  
by someone else  
if i tie my hair with kindness and  
sprinkle hope on my tongue  
i can burn all of these suitcases  
because i don't need to hide  
what's inside myself  
from anyone anymore

all you need to do  
is take one step forward  
your heart is growing stronger every day  
*you contain multitudes of love*

You  
contain  
MULTITUDES  
of  
Love

The text is centered and surrounded by decorative, hand-drawn leafy branches. One branch extends from the right side of the word 'contain', curving upwards and to the right. Another branch extends from the left side of the word 'MULTITUDES', curving downwards and to the left. A third branch extends from the left side of the word 'of', curving downwards and to the left. The branches are composed of simple, curved lines representing stems and small, pointed shapes representing leaves.

give yourself time  
to let him go

*it will happen slowly, then all at once*



oh little honey–  
i know today feels lonely  
just take a deep breath  
okay, one more

my sweet sweetheart–  
at the end of the night  
i know it feels like  
all you have are these two hands  
all i have are two hands  
but don't you see how these hands can lift  
they can hold you up  
they can reach out  
they can warm a cold heart  
they can warm your cold heart

my darling baby girl–  
don't you know that  
you are a star in a beautiful galaxy  
the moon will always wait for you  
she's ready to teach you that  
you can learn to feel connected  
even when you are alone

and just like  
the new moon  
you will rebuild  
*you will become whole again*

i don't know  
what it's like  
to be a damsel in distress

*i saved myself from you*

remember,  
you are infinite  
with or without him

he may have  
felt like home  
but he'll never  
*keep you warm at night*

how did we become  
a generation of women  
who were told we need a man to be whole  
without any role models  
who are even worthy enough  
to be our halves

my favourite women are travellers  
nomads holding keys between their teeth  
no baggage  
ask them where they're going  
they'll say  
*where the wind takes me*  
ask them when they're coming back  
they'll smile  
and you'll realize that  
they never really leave

nobody is worth  
letting go of your self worth



when you leave a woman. light her hair on fire. watch as her ashes litter the ground. you expect her to blow into nothing when you walk away. but you forget that women were made to burn. women were made to rise again. a phoenix born from ashes. one look, and you'll become dust.

i have no scrapes or bruises  
my knees have not hit  
earth in years i avoid  
mountains as if they're  
impossible to climb  
i always walk around  
instead of jumping over  
i'd rather turn back than leap  
but i'm learning that  
if you want to find  
love you have to be  
willing to fall sometimes

there is a map to get to know me  
i drew it in invisible ink  
that you'll swear you can see  
after a glass or two of red wine  
this map has no end or beginning  
just directions of me wanting  
to get to know you  
it'll never tell you which way is north  
for my internal compass is too affected  
by magnets and whatever direction  
the moon wants to pull me in  
it's less of a map and more of a dance  
scattered drunk footprints  
that think they're making their way somewhere  
this map is too afraid to tell you who i am  
though every day i will try to let you unfold it  
but all i can manage right now  
is to rip off this corner  
lean closer so you can hear me  
i think  
just maybe  
i'm learning that  
you can share yourself  
without losing pieces of you

i fell asleep on a sailboat  
and woke up during  
nautical twilight  
but the stars were tired  
of navigating  
and i was tired of  
being told what to do  
they spit reflections  
into the sea  
and the waves spit back  
sea spray whispered,  
*hold on tightly* in my left ear  
and *let go* in my right  
so there i was  
on salt-washed deck  
holding on to what has  
always been mine  
and letting go of what  
never belonged to me  
in the first place

when i stopped looking  
for love in someone else  
*i found love within myself*


maybe i like boys  
with broad shoulders  
and thick necks  
maybe i like girls  
with long eyelashes  
and upturned noses  
but mostly  
maybe i just like people  
with warm hands  
loud laughs  
and good hearts

you are always worth fighting for

whatever's weighing  
on your heart  
baby,  
let it go  
*it's ok to just be happy*



It's OK to  
*just* BE HAPPY

A decorative illustration of a leafy branch, possibly an olive branch, with several small, pointed leaves extending from a central stem, positioned below the text.

your strength can  
move mountains,  
open hearts  
if you let it

*sometimes we forget how powerful we are*

when is the last time  
you told yourself  
*you are enough*

i am the  
only one who  
can complete myself

this is the end of  
the weeping. the  
breaking. the cracking  
myself in two. if i give  
away any more pieces  
i will cease to exist.  
this is my promise.

*i will be stronger this time*

how hard it is to chisel these bricks  
this room was not made for escaping  
i do not need bars  
i have no windows  
(there is no oxygen left)  
look at all these walls i've built  
(count the bricks, i dare you)  
have you ever tried to  
demolish insecurity?  
we need more than  
a sledgehammer here  
can't you see?

*there is strength within vulnerability*

when the future  
feels far off  
and you can't see  
through the fog  
don't forget to look  
for right now,  
right in front of you

he can't crawl his way  
back into your life  
if you're living  
and loving above ground



i don't need a love  
that sweeps me  
off my feet

*i need a love that tends to my roots*

when your feet are heavier  
than the concrete poured into sidewalks  
and your pockets are filled with breadcrumbs  
each step forward feels like you  
are creating a destination out of anthills  
formed on gaps and dandelions breaking dirt  
you are forging a path  
perhaps without end  
but all you can do is put one foot forward  
drop the breadcrumbs behind you  
you'll find that the right person picks them up  
no questions as to why you're leaving them  
when they find your path  
and finally find you  
they'll see light feet and brightness  
you are dancing in the fountain  
look at how you shine  
but today they still have breadcrumbs to collect  
and you have a few more heavy steps to walk  
but tomorrow,  
tomorrow  
you'll find someone new  
and someone new will find you

you'll  
find  
someone  
new,  
and someone  
new will  
find you

start opening up your heart  
to people  
who are good for it

i am shining.

there are a million beads of light.

where did all this light come from?

who kept turning it off?

and how did i go so long without feeling happy?

*you'll come back to yourself*

## acknowledgements

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## about the author

michaela angemeer is passionate about sharing her self love journey and inspiring readers to spend more time with their feelings. she's a canadian poet who grew up in brampton, ontario.

after sharing her poetry on instagram for a year, she self-published her first collection, *when he leaves you* in 2018. the book debuted as the #1 new release in canadian poetry online. her second book, *you'll come back to yourself*, was released in 2019, making it to the #1 best seller in poetry the following year.

her newest collection, *please love me at my worst*, explores connecting with your inner child, loving the worst parts of yourself, coming out as bisexual, and focusing on self-growth.

michaela now lives in kitchener, ontario with her frenchton, beatrice and too many plants.

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